

**TO:** Governor Barbour  
**FROM:** John Arledge  
**DATE:** March 23, 2005  
**SUBJECT:** Education message (March 23 – 30)

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As we discussed this morning, I believe we need to be more aggressive and active on education. We did that on Medicaid, but we have not yet engaged on education. Per your request, I have outlined some activities we could undertake over the next several days:

#### **Thursday, March 24**

##### *Sun Herald* Editorial Board

They continue to be our strongest editorial board. They need to be briefed on the budget and education from our perspective before things get really ugly.

##### Ocean Springs Chamber Speech

It would be beneficial to use this speaking opportunity to talk about education. Ocean Springs is a strong education community, and it is a good audience for us to tell our side. Since we will have already done the *Sun Herald*, we can plug it to WLOX to get another education story Coast-wide.

#### **Friday, March 25**

##### UpGrade Press Conference

We are hearing troubling things from Cecil Brown in regards to "UpGrade." And, because of Medicaid, "UpGrade" has been off the press radar for weeks. We need to have an excuse to talk about it again

and urge the House to quit dragging their feet and finish it. A dust-up and some strong language over “UpGrade” would be good right now.

## **Monday, March 28**

### New Money for Education Announcement

I think it would be helpful for the state to hear about the increased tax collection numbers from you first – and even more helpful if you are the first to say we should use a portion for education. To some Mississippians this might even sound like a new education proposal from you.

## **Tuesday, March 29**

### Local Tax Increase & Teacher Firing Threats

We need to plant a question in the minds of the public and the media as to whether the things they are told from their local education leaders are truthful. We can start this by citing two examples we know to be hyperbole – local tax hike and teacher firing threats. We have the numbers to back this up, but they will have to be released during a press conference to do this properly. Our message can simply be that we should confine our disagreements to the Capitol and not scare teachers and local taxpayers during the debate over education. We did the same thing last year with press conferences which questioned the districts’ end-fund balances and teacher firing threats. The result was an open discussion in the press over end-fund balances.

## **Wednesday, March 30**

### Live Interview with WTVA

I remain very concerned about Northeast Mississippi. First, the area is critical to reelection. Second, they have a higher-than-average white Medicaid population and are very pro-public education. Third, some of our most vocal legislative critics have rural, white constituencies there. And fourth, the largest newspaper in the region has taken an overtly hostile slant to their coverage of the administration. This all means I

think it is paramount that we begin cultivating a strong relationship with WTVA. I would like to recommend that we offer WTVA a live 6 p.m. interview with you next week to talk about education. Your interview with WTVA on Medicaid before the Special Session was very good, and we can do it again with minimal risk.